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SALORA WRIGHT
State President

When I think of National Convention, I think of a lot of things: awesome sessions, great speakers, and amazing national officers. I also think of things that aren't directly related to the actual convention. I think of the fun activities that we were able to participate in during what little free time we were fortunate enough to have. Though numerous hours of volunteer work were put in by many FFA members present at National Convention during their leisure time, everyone was able to enjoy at least a little bit of fun.

While we were there, we had delegate work to do for the majority of our days, but we also had some spare time. All through the week you could find mini-concerts in the RCA dome. On Tuesday, the delegates were invited to a special movie premiere of "The Ultimate Gift." After the sessions on Wednesday and Thursday nights there were mega-concerts that featured such performers as: Carrie Underwood, Jason Aldean, Jamie Oneal, and Blake Shelton. On Friday night the PRCA's Xtreme Bull Tour was in town.



Pictured above (front row: l-r): Jennifer Himburg, Southern Region Vice President-Alabama Association; Beau Williamson, National President-California Association; Kacy Baugher, National Secretary-Illinois Association; and Jamie Cecil, Central Region Vice President-Colorado Association (back row: l-r): Janette Barnard, Western Region Vice President-Arizona Association; and Coty Back, Eastern Region Vice President-Kentucky Association. Jennifer Himburg is the thirteenth National FFA Officer from Alabama.

Apart from National FFA sponsored events we had the chance to spend time with friends we had made over the summer. We went bowling, ice skating, to the movies, out to eat, or just hung out. Since all the delegates were in the same hotel, it was a lot of fun. The city played host to around 55,000 members and 475 of those were delegates. By the end of the week most of us were thankful that we had a Starbucks in the hotel because it made breakfast easy.

There were several things that I found really great about National Convention that were quite simple. One of these was the constant competition to try and get signatures from all 52 associations (the 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands). A few of my friends and I tried to make it a bit more difficult by only getting signatures from people that we already knew. Though I didn't quite make it to 52 signatures, it was a great way to meet people from across the country and see

how diverse our organization is.

The late nights and early mornings will not soon be forgotten, but that's what made it so special. The memories I made are unforgettable, like drinking milkshakes with a bunch of Cajuns at midnight, having the state officers from the New England area force me to call home past midnight just to hear how a friend back home talks, and learning a bit of Spanish from the Puerto Rican delegates. The spare time fun is truly what made the convention so great.



THE ALABAMA REPORTER

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TRAVIS MCGOWIN
State Vice President

As time begins to draw closer to our state FFA convention, it is essential for FFA chapters to start practicing for Career Development Events (CDEs). CDEs are an essential part of state convention by helping FFA members choose a career path that is right for them, allowing fair and fun competition in agricultural events, and showing the best of the best in agricultural education students around the state. Career Development Events cover a wide range of areas in the agricultural industry. With this broad exposure comes the opportunity for FFA members to catch a glimpse of what each career area entails. CDEs actually allow participants to see which careers in the agricultural industry are right for them. Competition is regulated fairly to ensure that each and every participant is given an equal chance to show his or her ability to properly perform in the contest. These

competitions allow each FFA Chapter to show their ability and knowledge in a competition. FFA Chapters should be wise in choosing the members for team events as well as the competitors for single participation events. Chapters should have competitions between the members that want to compete. This way, FFA Chapters put their best foot forward in each competition. The idea is to send the best possible team or person to compete. I wish the best of luck to all competitors in each contest this year at the local, county, district, and state levels. I also want to wish the best of luck to the finalists who will be chosen to represent the Alabama FFA Association at the National FFA Convention. It is competitors like you who keep the agricultural industry thriving today.



W. BRANDON SMITH
State Secretary

I know many readers think that, while holding a state office is a true honor, it is also just a lot of fun and games. That would be where you are wrong. I have figured out how to become a sixty-year old man at seventeen: become a state officer. Allow me to take you through just a typical day in the life of a state FFA officer.

First things first, you are still in high school. You wake up at six o'clock in the morning, groggy from the previous night's work on pre-calculus and proficiency award applications, not to count the five scholarship applications that are due next week. You shower and get ready for the busy day ahead. When dressing, you remember that you have two other club meetings that day, one first thing in the morning, one right before the end of the day. You put on your other club apparel, check your planner that just happens to look like an unabridged version of *War and Peace*, and rush to school, luckily remembering that you also have a chapter visit.

Since you are a role model in your field, you are also the president of this other organization. You leave your



English class in the middle of the lecture – you will just borrow the notes from your friend later – and fly down the hall to set up your meeting room. When you finish this meeting, you gather your backpack and briefcase and proceed to the agriscience shop to change for your chapter visit.

After talking to you math teacher and presenting her with the note signed by the administration, you jump in your truck and travel to the chapter. There is only one catch: the chapter to which you are speaking is an hour and a half away. When you arrive, you speak briefly with the receptionist and try your best to navigate the unfamiliar hallways. When you reach your destination, you are just in time to begin your speech. You worry the entire time that you are speaking about the speech and whether it is effective or lively enough, but you have no means by which to adjust the tone of the speech at this point: you are already done. You thank the advisor, present him with an evaluation form, and leave immediately so as to get back to school in time for your next club meeting.

When you arrive back at school, you have just enough time to slip in the rear door and catch the message of the meeting. You make many apologies for arriving late and are forgiven again. The bell rings to dismiss school and you are off to your job. This will take you from early afternoon into the evening. You stumble into your household, eat supper with your family, and start on the homework and applications that kept you so busy the



night before. It's just a stepping stone to start the entire cycle over again tomorrow. I do not intend for this article to sway anyone from taking on this great honor. I only want to enlighten the public of the great burden that we in this position take on to make the organization what it is today.

I also dedicate a portion of my article to two friends that I have recently lost: Mr. Rex Smith and Mr. Willie Frank Sellers. These two men are my grandfathers. They have provided the support and encouragement that it has taken to put me where I am today. I lost Rex Smith on October 10, 2006, and Willie Frank Sellers on December 25, 2006. They will always live in my heart and memories, and will be immortally preserved as a driving force in my success.



JERIKA BUTTRAM
State Treasurer

This year's National FFA Convention was one of the most exhilarating experiences that I have had in the FFA. It is an honor for me to say that I was able to represent the Alabama FFA Association and the Geraldine FFA Chapter in the Parliamentary Procedure Career Development Event. The team included Hope Bowers, Olivia Landstreet, Amanda Pangburn, Kelli Hamm, and Paige



Pictured above (front row: l-r): Mike Tidwell, Alabama Farmers Federation; Jerika Buttram; Salora Wright; Tia Gail Bush; Brittney Rawlinson; Kimberly Henderson; Joanna Stewart; Matt Barton; and Dr. Joe Morton, State Superintendent of Education. (Back row: l-r): Paul Pinyan, Alabama Farmers Federation; Brandon Smith; Justin Posey; Caleb Colquitt; Travis McGowin; Dexter Vines; and Jerry Newby, President-Alabama Farmers Federation.

Dobson. Our team was one of over 40 teams that participated in this event. We received a silver award and placed in the top 25 teams. We were ecstatic to receive this honor.

I thank everyone of my team members for their hard work and dedication. I also congratulate the other teams from across Alabama who competed on the National level and participated in the many events. I thank all of the FFA members who represented the state of Alabama at this year's convention. It was truly a convention to remember.



JUSTIN POSEY
State Reporter

The International Leadership for State Officers (ILSSO) is a great opportunity for present and past state officers to expand their knowledge of agriculture from a global perspective. Some of the advantages of participating in ILSSO include:

- Learning about agriculture on a global scale
- Seeing how the U.S. competes in agriculture across the globe
- Gaining an awareness of possible career opportunities in global agriculture

- Living with a family from another culture

This year ILSSO will be taking present and past state officers to Spain. The group will depart from Newark, New Jersey on January 4, 2007 to arrive in Madrid, Spain. The group will travel across the country and visit agricultural sights in Madrid, Toledo, Cordoba, Seville, Jerez, Antequera, Granada, Murcia, and Valencia before arriving back in Newark on January 16, 2007.

I will provide more information regarding the trip in the next FFA Reporter.



CALEB COLQUITT
State Sentinel

It still amazes me that this happens every year. I've wondered about it since I was about five years old. No, you aren't accidentally reading *Forest Gump*. The event I'm referring to is indeed the National FFA Convention. I'm not surprised that the convention happens. What shocks me every year is the quality of the convention. Not that I don't have great faith in our organization, but how they make each year not only as good as the last but even better. The improvement and the attitude of constantly wanting to do better every year is absolutely astonishing. You have everything from CDEs to live concerts to the SPAM truck and Oscar Mayer Winnie Mobile.

Ask anyone that's ever been to a National FFA Convention and you'll probably get a range of answers, but the one thing all of them will probably say is that there's no place on Earth like it. If you ask someone who has been several

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times, they will likely tell you that it is absolutely incredibly and just keeps getting better. Few milestones are as magical as an FFA member's first convention. This is especially true when witnessing the first general session. I always tell greenhands on their very first time how amazing it is to see forty thousand members all clad in blue corduroy stand during the opening ceremony. They usually laugh and ask what is so special about that. That moment is forever etched in my mind from that fateful day I first saw it in Kansas City, Missouri. It was even more important to me eight years later when I was one of those members. In case you're wondering why it was different seeing it and reciting the part at the national convention, when you are a member and you recite the part about practicing brotherhood, honoring agriculture, and developing leadership you realize something. Any member standing in that room realizes that he/she is part of something much bigger than himself/herself. Because every member there has a common bond, whether you're from Alabama, Wisconsin, Oregon, or Hawaii. Everybody there loves agriculture, treats you like family, and wants to make the world a better place. All FFA members have a common bond, and there are about

fifty-five thousand new friends to meet including the six national officers who are committed to our great organization with all their heart and the four hundred seventy-five delegates that make the decisions that help mold the FFA.

So what is it that makes the National FFA Convention so special? Is it the FFA Mega Store, the career show, the sessions, or the city in which the convention is set? No one would argue that those factors make the FFA what it is, but I think there's a different answer. The store and career show weren't always there, the sessions change every year, and the host city has change a couple of times. I've been going to the national convention since 1995 and I truly believe the elusive factor that allows improvement every year is the people attending. From members and advisors to parents and sponsors, the National FFA Convention has the natural magnetism that it does because of the people. The personalities are different: the National FFA President on center stage; Dr. Larry D. Case, national advisor, helping run the show; the advisor with a parliamentary procedure team in the finals; the delegate studying his issue; the four-



Pictured above are the 2006 American FFA Degree recipients from Alabama (l-r): Ross Stewart Trull, Winfield; Cody Horton, Montevallo; Lee Berry, Red Bay; Philip Michael Davis, Gaston; and Matt Barton, Gaston.

year-old future member watching his big sister in the creed contest; and the member just there to better himself/herself and the world one person at a time. That is truly what the aura and the feeling of the national convention is. It's the diversity of all those people who gather for a common purpose, the FFA.



ALABAMA



Pictured above are the Alabama FFA members and advisors which assembled for the state photograph at the 2006 National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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